April 1, 2009

To Concerned Members of the Newport Community,

On Thursday, April 23, 2009 at 3:30 p.m., the Secondary Education Department will be presenting the award winning film, *Accelerating America*, at the Jane Pickens Theater in Newport.

*Accelerating America tells the story of a revolutionary school in Rhode Island that gives inner-city youths who are at risk of dropping out a second chance by accelerating their studies. At the head of the school is a fearless principal, Robert DeBlois, who as a quadriplegic knows something about overcoming adversity. If the word “inspiring” get overused, it rarely feels as apt as when watching DeBlois apply his tough love educational techniques on hardened teens. We watch three students – America, Jason and Yazmine – as they struggle through a make-or-break year, drawing upon conviction, pride and humor in order to survive.* <http://www.acceleratingamerica.com/>

We invite you, as members of the Newport community committed to meeting the needs of our youth, to view this film. It is our hope that the graduation rate of the youth in the community can be increased through heightened awareness and attention to the needs of our youth. There will be a 30 minute panel discussion following the film. Robert DeBlois, the extraordinary educator featured in the film, and former and current students who will share their thoughts on critical steps needed to achieve the goal of ***all*** students graduating from high school.

“Dropping out is quitting on yourself. Dropping out is quitting on your country and it’s not an option-not anymore.”(President Barack Obama, 2009)

We hope that you can join with members of your community at this important community event to examine and discuss alternative, meaningful options for students at risk of dropping out of school.

Seating is limited and on a “first come” basis.

R.I.D.E. Professional Credit Hours (2.5) will be awarded to educators for participation in the event.

Sincerely,

Christine Bond, Ed.D. Kathleen Vespia, Ed.D. *Salve Regina University Secondary Education Program*